

Elk: 'The elk just kind of had it, and it took off after her'

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Maine said he saw a woman, with her dog in tow, get up close to a mother and calf to take a photo with her cellphone.

"This woman had come up over the dunes," he said. "She got about 10 feet away. Then the elk just kind of had it, and it took off after her."

Wildlife biologist Dave Nuzum with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said the reaction to humans varies from cow to cow.

"What seems to set them off around people is if there's a dog," he said.

Elk do not usually see humans as predators, Nuzum explained, but dogs can resemble coyotes. He recommends leaving dogs behind or on leashes in any area with lots of elk or calves, along with keeping a long distance from elk.

No warning

Hayley Rogers of Gearhart conveyed in a Facebook post Monday her displeasure at a lack of warning signs about elk near public beaches.

Rogers wrote she was hiking the Birdy Beach Trail near the mouth of the Necanicum River Monday when she saw a large elk about 200 yards away. Having lived in the area for 14 years, Rogers added, she knew not to get close.

"As I went over the hill I heard the loud galloping of hooves along with crunching grass," Rogers wrote. "I turned to see a 1,000 (pound) elk (a very large female I believe) coming at me full throttle."

Rather than run, she chose to stand her ground: "So I stood my ground and found myself yelling, 'Bad elk, No!' at the top of my lungs."

Rogers wrote she ended up calling 911 as the elk slowed and got closer and she feared she had nowhere to hide. The police, she wrote, told her she should not have been in the elk's habitat in the first place.

"Fortunately by now I had found some type of marker in the ground which was metal and about 4 feet long with a flag on the end of it," she wrote. "The elk was now 20 (feet) or so away and I was swinging



Photo courtesy of Neal Maine

Wildlife photographer Neal Maine said he spotted a woman and her dog get too close to an elk cow, which then charged. People are advised to stay well clear of cows and calves, especially during calving season from late May through early June.



Photo courtesy of Neal Maine

During calving season from late May to early June, elk cows will leave the herd hours to days before giving birth. For up to three weeks after birth, they will hide their calves in grasslands, shrublands and forests.

this marker violently at the elk. This was the first time the elk actually stopped.

"I was done being scared

and more angry at the police department for telling me I shouldn't be on a trail that had been publicized by the commu-

nity paper, which I've ran on for years."

Gearhart City Administrator Chad Sweet said this is the first instance he has heard of someone being charged by an elk in his 18 years living in the area.

While there are no plans to put up signs at public beach approaches pointing out calving season, Sweet said the Fish and Wildlife Department is working on informative signs on interactions between people and animals. He added Gearhart is looking at cutting down some trees near the beach dunes to lower fire risk and prevent habitation by elk or transients.

Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman said he focuses on the human half of the equation, shoeing people away when

they stop on the side of U.S. Highway 101 and try to get close to the elk for cellphone photos.

"This Gearhart herd, they don't run off because you're out there mowing your lawn," Bowman said, adding if people pretend not to notice nearby elk, the animals usually go about their way.

Bowman, Sweet and Maine all lamented the trend of people trying to get closer to elk for photos.

"I guess when someone gets stomped, there will be more heightened awareness," Bowman said.

Calving season

According to the U.S. Forest Service, migrating elk herds with pregnant cows halt temporarily in late May to early June

for calving season. Cows will leave the herd hours to days before giving birth. Calves are secluded up to three weeks with their mothers in a calving area, which can be grasslands, shrublands and forests.

"There's a patch of forest in the Del Rey Beach area where we've seen calves being born in the last three years," Maine said.

Nuzum said there is very little of South County that is not elk habitat, estimating more than 5,000 animals in the Saddle Mountain wildlife management unit.

Elk calves curl up and lay in grass or other covered areas as part of their survival strategy, he said, and if someone were to come across one by accident, he advised it is best to get out of the area.



Photo courtesy of Veronica Montoya

The Sea Lion Defense Brigade reported finding 11 shell casings from a .44-caliber weapon May 18 at the Port of Astoria's East End Mooring Basin. The group reported finding 19 shell casings in early April, as well.

Sea lions: It's a difficult case because of the number of reports

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Thursday, The Humane Society offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of anyone responsible for the shootings.

Shell casings

On April 6, members of the Sea Lion Defense Brigade reported finding 19 bullet casings on the Port of Astoria's East End Mooring Basin causeway. On May 18, they reported finding 11 more shell casings at the basin. Hellberg said more were found near Buoy Beer Co. on Ninth Street.

He said the local wildlife stranding networks have been doing necropsies on the animals.

"We've been watching this and trying to investigate this as we can," he said, adding it is a difficult case because of the number of reports and the

longstanding conflict between recreational and commercial fishermen and sea lions.

"I'm trying to develop additional leads right now," Hellberg said. "I've exhausted many leads already."

Since 1972, sea lions and harbor seals have been covered by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act. Shooting them is punishable by criminal penalties up to \$100,000 and one year in prison. Civil penalties of up to \$11,000 can also be assessed for each violation of the act.

The Humane Society and Hellberg are directing anyone with information concerning the shootings to call NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement in Astoria at 503-325-5934 or the NOAA Enforcement Hotline at 800-853-1964. Callers may remain anonymous.

Why sea lions are here
The NOAA Northwest

Fisheries Science Center recently reported on the increase of sea lions in the Columbia River and starvation in California.

Male sea lions, NOAA said, seek out high-energy, oily fish such as herring and sardines. In recent years, they've come in increasing numbers to the mouth of the Columbia River to feed on strong runs of smelt, taking up residence on docks and jetties near Astoria.

Their numbers locally can range from a few hundred to more than 2,000, depending on the fish runs. As the smelt run dissipates and male sea lions migrate to rookeries in Southern California, there are fewer in the river.

A die-off of sardines, a traditional food source of sea lions in California, coincides with large recent die-offs and strandings of sea lions along the California coastline, NOAA reported.



Relay for Life Fundraiser CMH Car Show

Come to the 2015 CMH Car Show

Columbia Memorial Hospital's Relay for Life team welcomes you to join us for the first annual CMH Car Show to raise money for the American Cancer Society.

Join us on Goonies Weekend for classic cars and a good cause!

Who: Car Lovers

What: CMH Car Show and Fundraiser

When: June 6, 2015, 10am-4pm

Where: Columbia Memorial Hospital, westside parking lot (near the helipad)

Cost: No cost for visitors, \$30/vehicle

Contact: Ivan Sultan, CMH Relay for Life Team Captain at 503-338-4005 or ivan_sultan@columbiamemorial.org



Register your vehicle

PARTICIPANT:

Name(s) _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Club/Team Affiliation _____

VEHICLE:

Year _____ Make _____

Model _____

Please complete this form and mail it with the entrance fee to the address below.

Entrance Fee: \$30/vehicle OR Relay team participant (Make checks payable to American Cancer Society/Relay for Life)

Mail To: Columbia Memorial Hospital
Attn: Ivan Sultan
2111 Exchange St.
Astoria, OR 97103



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